

Message Text

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15

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 DRC-01 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11

FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01

OMB-01 NSC-10 /129 W

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P R 071007Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 671

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: SW PINT

SUBJECT: SWEDISH ELECTION

SUMMARY: TWO MAIN OPPONENTS MET IN DEBATE SEPT. 5 WHICH SHOWED OPPOSITION LEADER FALLDIN ABLE TO HOLD HIS OWN AGAINST VETERAN POLEMICIST-DEBATER PALME. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER PALME AND OPPOSITION LEADER FALLDIN MET HEAD-ON SEPT. 5 IN A DEBATE, PARTIALLY TELEVISED NATIONWIDE, WHICH OBSERVERS HAD JUDGED TO BE POTENTIALLY CRUCIAL TO ELECTION OUTCOME. MORNING-AFTER CONSENSUS WAS THAT FALLDIN DID BETTER THAN EXPECTED AT PROJECTING A STRONG, REASONABLY DECISIVE IMAGE. ALTHOUGH PALME WAS FASTER WITH FORENSIC FOOTWORK, HE WAS NOT QUITE AS EFFECTIVE AS EXPECTED. MOST OBSERVERS RATED OUTCOME A DRAW INSTEAD OF EXPECTED SOCDEM SUCCESS. SINCE SOCDEMS ARE FIGHTING AN UPHILL BATTLE (OPPOSITION HAS 50.5 PERCENT IN LATEST POLL), THIS WAS DISAPPOINTING RESULT FOR GOVERNMENT

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PARTY.

2. IN TELEVISED PORTION OF DEBATE UNEMPLOYMENT WAS MAIN, ALMOST EXCLUSIVE TOPIC, WITH PALME CLEARLY ON THE DEFENSIVE. FALLDIN DEMANDED TO KNOW WHAT WAS SOCDEM PROGRAM FOR REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT, MATCHING AGAINST PALME'S IMPRECISE REPLIES HIS OWN PROPOSAL TO CREATE 100,000 NEW JOBS BY A VARIETY OF MEASURES DESIGNED TO PROMOTE BUSINESS EXPANSION IN LABOR INTENSIVE AREAS. PALME TICKED OFF VAGUENESS OF CENTER PROPOSAL, HE REPEATEDLY WAS CONSTRAINED TO FALL BACK ON DEFENSIVE ASSERTION THAT UNEMPLOYMENT IN SWEDEN IS LOWER THAN IN ALL OTHER INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES. (THE CENTRE PARTY SEEMS TO BE SCORING WITH ITS ATTACKS ON THE EMPLOYMENT ISSUE. SWEDEN'S BUSINESS WEEKLY ("VECKANS AFFARER") HAS POLL THIS WEEK SHOWING THAT 40 PERCENT OF AN UNDEFINED SAMPLING OF VOTERS FEEL THAT A BOURGEOIS (OPPOSITION) GOVERNMENT WOULD BE BEST EQUIPPED TO PROTECT EMPLOYMENT, WITH 30 PERCENT FAVORING THE SOCDEMS. THIS IS A CHANGE FROM 32 PERCENT (B) AGAINST 27 PERCENT (S) IN APRIL 1973 WHEN SAME QUESTION WAS ASKED.)

3. FALLDIN, WHO WAS WELL BRIEFED, PERFORMED BETTER THAN EXPECTED IN FENDING OFF PALME'S JABS. FOR INSTANCE, PALME STRIKING AT WELL-KNOWN LACK OF UNITY AMONG THREE BOURGEOIS PARTIES, DEMANDED THAT THEY PRESENT A PROGRAM FOR THEIR COALITION GOVERNMENT SO THAT VOTERS WOULD KNOW WHAT THEY WERE REALLY VOTING FOR. FALLDIN REPLIED THAT THREE PARTIES WERE APPEALING INDEPENDENTLY FOR SUPPORT, BUT ALL WITHIN A COMMON "MIDDLE POLICY" FRAMEWORK. IT IS NOT SWEDISH CUSTOM FOR POSSIBLE COALITION PARTIES TO COME OUT WITH A JOINT PROGRAM BEFORE THE ELCTION. "I HAVE NOT ASKED PALME TO DRAW UP A COMMON PROGRAM WITH MR. HERMANSSON (COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER)," HE SAID.

4. CENTER PARTY HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED BY PERFORMANCE OF THEIR LEADER. ALSO ENCOURAGING TO OPPOSITION ARE AUGUST UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES JUST PUBLISHED WHICH SHOW A RISE IN UNEMPLOYMENT. ALTHOUGH RISE IS SEASONAL AND EXPECTED, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT AT THIS TIME REPRESENTS ANOTHER SETBACK FOR THE SOCDEMS. HOWEVER, VERY FEW IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS ARE PREDICTING A SOCDEM DEFEAT. AS VISITING AMERICAN POLITICAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SCIENTIST STEPHEN KOBlick (SPECIALIST IN SWEDISH POLITICS) POINTS OUT, THERE SEEM TO BE ENOUGH "UNDECIDEDS" LEFT FOR SOCDEMS TO PICK UP THE 2-3 PERCENT THEY NEED TO SQUEEZE THROUGH, AND THEIR COUNTRYWIDE ORGANIZATION HAS PROVED ITSELF IN THEPAST CAPABLE OF SUCH A FEAT.
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